



OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

Mississippi Forestry Commission
660 North Street, Suite 300, Jackson, MS 39202

www.mfc.state.ms.us

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Contact: Leslie G. "Opie" Blackwell,
MFC Firewise Coordinator
(601) 540-3358
lblackwell@mfc.state.ms.us

Lake Hillsdale Property Owners' Association, Inc. Earns National Recognition for Wildfire Preparedness

Lake Hillsdale Property Owners' Association, Inc. -- Because of its efforts to reduce the vulnerability of homes and landscapes to wildfire, Lake Hillsdale Property Owners' Association, Inc. has earned Firewise Communities/USA recognition from the National Firewise Communities Program.

"The Firewise Communities/USA recognition program will help Lake Hillsdale Property Owners' Association, Inc. become more aware of what a local community can do to prepare for wildfire," said David Moore, Northeast District 1 Volunteer Fire Department Assistant Chief.

Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. worked with Robert Thornton, Mississippi Forestry Commission Firewise Communities/USA Facilitator, to conduct a wildfire hazard assessment and develop a plan to address safety concerns. Residents then worked together to implement the plan.

"Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. is located in Pearl River County Mississippi. Pearl River County was the "hottest county" in the state for wildfire occurrence during Mississippi fiscal year's 2006-2008. Pearl River County experienced 752 wildfires and lost approximately 19,363 acres. Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. has taken a great step forward in reducing its wildfire threat by participating in the Firewise Communities/USA process," said Mississippi Forestry Commission Firewise Program Coordinator Leslie Blackwell.

Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. is the second community in Mississippi to be recognized as Firewise Communities/USA, joining many other communities nationwide that have been recognized since the program's inception in 2002.

To receive Firewise Communities/USA recognition, Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. met a rigorous set of requirements. The community completed the following activities:

Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. held a Firewise day on May 2, 2009. The Firewise program was introduced to the association. Approximately one-

hundred association residents attended Firewise meeting on August 29, 2009 to learn more about having a Firewise home and community. "Achieving Firewise recognition is not a quick or easy process. Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. has done an outstanding job of creating a local Firewise Task Force and implementing Firewise principles," said Jim Smalley, manager of the Firewise Communities program. "By preparing homes, structures, and landscapes *before* a wildfire occurs, Lake Hillsdale Property Owner's Association Inc. has dramatically increased the chance that homes and structures will be protected when a wildfire occurs."

Working through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), state forestry agencies support the Firewise Communities/USA recognition effort. The program is a nationwide initiative that recognizes communities for taking action to protect people and properties from the risk of fire in the wildland/urban interface. This program is of special interest to small communities and neighborhood associations that are willing to mitigate against wildfire by adopting and implementing programs tailored to their needs. The communities create the programs themselves with cooperative assistance from state forestry agencies and local fire staff.

Fire-prone communities can work with local professionals to earn Firewise Communities/USA status by meeting the following criteria:

- Enlist a wildland/urban interface specialist to complete a community assessment and create a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community.
- Sponsor a local Firewise Task Force Committee, Commission or Department, which maintains the Firewise Communities/USA program and tracks its progress or status.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA Day annually, dedicated to a local Firewise project.
- Invest a minimum of \$2.00 per capita annually in local Firewise projects. (Work by municipal employees or volunteers using municipal and other equipment can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose.)
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA that documents continuing compliance with the program.

Communities interested in earning recognition may visit www.firewise.org/usa for more information.

Firewise Communities/USA is a part of the National Firewise Communities Program, an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The National Firewise Communities Program includes Firewise Communities workshops, Firewise Communities/USA recognition program, and support for fire organizations and community groups. The National Firewise Communities Program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the National Association of State Foresters, the US Fire Administration, and the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.

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